EU MATTERS
NIEL's Monthly European Environmental News

June
2017

Agriculture

[New method of developing agri-environment schemes proposes €3 million saving in Germany](#)
A method for developing more cost-effective agri-environment schemes is outlined in a recent study. The procedure can be used over large areas, accounts for hundreds of management regimes and several different endangered species. The model is one of the first to account for the timing of measures and, when applied to Saxony, proposed savings of over €3 million, while also improving some conservation outcomes.

[Reprieve for nature on farms: attempt to sabotage pesticides ban fails in Parliament vote](#)
Farmers across Europe who have been receiving several billions of euros of public money a year under the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) for improving nature on their land will no longer be able to spray pesticides on these areas.

[Diverse plant communities improve soil structure and, therefore, ecosystem services](#)
Plant diversity improves soil stability, the results of a greenhouse experiment and a long-term field study show. This study, which covered a range of different soil types, investigates the effects of plant diversity on soil structure, which is important for provision of ecosystem services, such as carbon storage and the mitigation of excessive run-off. The findings could help tackle the problem of soil degradation.

Biodiversity

[LED lighting changes grassland spider and beetle communities; dimmers and timers may reduce the impact](#)
The influence of light-emitting diodes (LED) on grassland invertebrate communities has been assessed in a recent study. White LEDs increased the total abundance and changed the species of spiders and beetles recorded. Dimming lights and switching lights off during the middle of the night were the best ways of reducing the effects on beetle and spider numbers.

Climate Change

[Review confirms climate change is threatening many ecosystem services](#)
Climate change is having mixed, but mostly negative, impacts on ecosystem services. Research, which brings together the findings of over 100 other studies, found that 59% of reported impacts of climate change on ecosystem services are negative, while just 13% are positive.

[EEB calls for tough response to US withdrawal from Paris Agreement](#)
The European Environmental Bureau has strongly condemned the decision of President Donald Trump to abandon the Paris Agreement. While welcoming the condemnation of the decision by world leaders, business leaders and some US politicians, it believes that these words must now be followed by actions.

[European Commission publishes damning study of carbon offsets](#)
Study finds that 85% of the offset projects under the UN's Clean Development Mechanism (CDM) to date failed in the objective of reducing emissions.

Energy

[Screening tool developed to assess seismic risks from geothermal energy projects](#)
A new screening tool to assess the potential seismic risks (earthquake activity) from deep geothermal energy projects has been outlined in a recent study. The tool provides categories of seismicity risk for projects, which are dependent on factors including geological aspects, as well as social concern and location.

Northern Ireland
environment
link

Brexit: *Updates on NIEL's EU Policy work after the UK Referendum decision can be found [here](#).*

[Clean energy package stumbles at first hurdle](#)
WWF claim energy ministers have set about weakening the EU's energy efficiency laws today, taking a step backwards both for the climate and the green economy as they adopted their position on the Energy Efficiency Directive revision.

Freshwater
[Decentralised supply of recycled water may save energy and reduce greenhouse gas emissions](#)
Reusing waste water for non-drinking uses in decentralised plumbing networks may improve the efficiency of water supply in urban areas. Researchers found that, a decentralised water supply could lead to energy savings and reductions in greenhouse gas emissions from water treatment of around 30%.

Invasive Species
[Invasive black locust tree can have sustainable future despite biodiversity impacts](#)
The black locust tree can be economically valuable and offer certain environmental benefits, but its dominant and invasive nature can have an adverse impact on biodiversity. A study, recommends tolerating the tree in some areas and eradicating it in others to balance its co-existence with people and nature.

[12 new invasive alien species included to Europe's list](#)
WWF welcomes decision by EU Member states to approve the inclusion of 12 new species to the EU's "List of Invasive Alien Species of Union Concern". One of the new species in the list is the raccoon dog, an increasingly popular exotic pet, which is also used for fur and is one of the main vectors of rabies in Europe.

Marine
[More must be done to catch and punish fisheries law breakers – EU auditors](#)
Controlling and sanctioning EU fisheries lawbreaking has improved over the last decade – but more must be done to comply with the Common Fisheries Policy (CFP), according to a report released by EU auditors.

Planning
[Managing water resources for an uncertain future: new method of robust planning](#)
Water-supply planning that considers the preferences of multiple stakeholders are more robust than planning decisions based on historical conditions. Using the Thames river basin as an example, the researchers present a new computer-modelling approach to assess which combinations of water-management measures best secure future water supply under a wide range of possible future conditions.

[Green buildings: researchers call for fuller environmental assessment](#)
Over half of a low - energy building's environmental impact occurred before it was occupied. Researchers recommend expanding the environmental assessment of buildings from just the operational stage of a building's life to include production and transport of materials, construction activities and building maintenance. A range of environmental impacts should be considered and not just energy use.

Sustainable Development
[Commission takes further steps to enhance business transparency on social and environmental matters](#)
The Commission has adopted guidelines on the disclosure of environmental and social information to help companies to disclose relevant information in a consistent and comparable manner. The aim is to boost transparency and performance and encourage companies to embrace a more sustainable approach.

Waste
[Greater participation and technological innovation may improve waste management in Naples](#)
A participatory approach to waste management has been tested to tackle problems with the collection of municipal waste. The study used stakeholder engagement to improve municipal waste-management decision-making. Residents and other stakeholders supported the use of a technological innovation to develop biomass fuel from waste.

Brexit: *Updates on NIEL's EU Policy work after the UK Referendum decision can be found [here](#).*